

PATENT  
Attorney Docket No. 43108.830028.US0  
Express Mail No. EV268509675US

**IN RE UNITED STATES PATENT APPLICATION**

**FOR**

**PRACTICE GOLF CAGE WITH A GOLF BALL GATHERING  
CENTRAL LOCATION**

**OF**

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## **PRACTICE GOLF CAGE WITH A GOLF BALL GATHERING CENTRAL LOCATION**

### **FIELD OF THE INVENTION**

The present invention relates to practice cages and, more particularly,  
5 to a golf practice cage with a golf ball gathering central location.

### **BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

In many sports it is desirable to repeatedly practice a physical motion.  
In the sport of golf, practicing the physical motion of swinging a golf club  
and striking a golf ball allows one to become a successful golfer. In  
10 particular, the ability to consistently repeat a golf swing, so as to obtain a  
consistent flight of a golf ball, is important to becoming a successful golfer.

In the sport of golf there are many ways to in which practice the art of  
striking a golf ball. A method most similar to actually playing golf on a golf  
course is to hit or drive standard or regulation golf balls at a driving range.  
15 However, practice-driving ranges are often inconveniently located, require a  
large plot of land, and they are expensive. Alternative to the use of a driving  
range, one can use standard golf balls to practice in the backyard of a home,  
in a vacant lot, or in an open field. However, practicing a full golf swing in  
this type of a geographic area leaves much to be desired. Often a back yard is  
20 not large enough to enable a golfer to use long distance golf clubs, and vacant  
lots or fields are often not readily available. Further, unless a golf swing is  
somewhat consistent, retrieving standard golf balls can be a tedious and time-  
consuming activity.

Alternative to ranges and vacant lots, many golfers practice their  
25 swings by hitting golf balls into nets. Conventional nets are far from  
satisfactory however. For example, most practice nets simply provide a cage  
or enclosed area in which a golfer can hit a golf ball. The golf balls,

however, are free to land and/or roll making retrieval difficult. Golf practice nets of this type include United States Patent No. 4,556,219, issued to Tillery, titled GOLF PRACTICE CAGE, incorporated herein by reference. To assist retrieval of golf balls, some practice nets are equipped with complicated and expensive electronic ball retrieving systems. Golf nets of this type include United States Patent NO. 5,690,555, issued to Lay, titled AUTOMATIC TEEING DEVICE AND CAGE FOR CATCHING GOLF BALLS HIT TOWARD THE CAGE, incorporated herein by reference.

Thus, it is desirable to provide an golf practice net or cage that corrals hit golf balls into a central location.

## **SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

To attain the advantages and in accordance with the purpose of the invention, as embodied and broadly described herein, a golf practice cage is provided. The golf practice cage includes a frame and enclosure that defines an area. A net or fold in on the backside of the cage funnels balls to a central location.

The present invention also provides a golf practice cage with a frame and enclosure that defines an area. A base net funnels balls to a central location.

The foregoing and other features, utilities and advantages of the invention will be apparent from the following more particular description of a preferred embodiment of the invention as illustrated in the accompanying drawings.

## **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING**

The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated in and constitute a part of this specification, illustrate embodiments of the present invention, and together with the description, serve to explain the principles thereof. Like items in the drawings are referred to using the same numerical reference:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a golf practice cage illustrative of an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a back elevation view of the cage of FIG. 1;  
FIG. 3 is a side elevation view of the cage of FIG. 1;  
FIG. 4 is a detailed view of the ball catch of FIG. 2; and  
FIG. 5 is a perspective view of a golf practice cage illustrative of  
5 another embodiment of the present invention.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The present invention will be described with respect to FIGs. 1-5.  
While the present invention will be described with reference to a particular  
golf practice cage, one of ordinary skill in the art will recognize on reading  
10 the disclosure that other style cages are possible. For example, instead of the  
dome shaped cage formed by crossed arcuate poles, square cages, triangular  
cages, or the like are possible.

Referring first to FIG. 1, a practice golf cage 10 is illustrated. Practice  
golf cage 10 is defined by frame 12. In this example, frame 12 comprises a  
15 pair of crossed arcuate poles 14 and 16 defining an area A. Pole 14 has a  
front end 18 and a rear end 20. Pole 16 has a front end 22 and a rear end 24.  
Instead of a solid pole, poles 14 and 16 could have front and rear portions  
connecting at a connector 26 located towards the apex of the frame.

As can be appreciated, frame 12 is a lightweight, easily manufactured,  
20 and easily fabricated frame, such as, for example, fiberglass poles. Other  
styles of frames could be used, such a conventional tubular frame having  
rectangular sidewalls and a rectangular back wall. Optionally, horizontal  
members H (which could be made of a similar material to pole 14 and 16)  
could extend between front end 18 and rear end 24, rear end 24 and rear end  
25 20, rear end 20 and front end 22 to help hold the frame shape. Another  
horizontal member H could exist between front end 18 and front end 22 (not  
shown).

Frame 12 has a front side 28, a backside 30, a left side 32, and a right  
side 34. An enclosure 36 extends substantially over each of the sides 30, 32,  
30 and 34 leaving an opening O for front side 28. The enclosure can be made of  
a number of different materials, such as, for example, canvass, nylon netting,

or the like. While enclosure 36 could be taut over frame 12, a taut enclosure would cause rebounding of a golf ball, which is particularly dangerous, so it is preferable to have enclosure 36 attached to frame 12 loosely. Enclosure 36 could be connected to frame 12 using ties 38, as shown in FIG 1.

5           A portion 40 of enclosure 36 substantially extends across backside 30. Portion 40 is loosely coupled to frame 12 from a top 42 of cage 10 to a bottom 44 of cage 10. Portion 40 is loosely coupled to allow portion 40 to billow out when a golf ball strikes portion 40. Extending upwards from bottom 44 and internal to portion 40 exists a fold 46, best seen in FIG. 2.

10          Fold 46 has a top edge E attached to frame 12 such that when golf balls strike portion 40, portion 40 billows out and a golf ball 48 drops into a fold opening F between top edge E of fold 46 and portion 40. A bottom edge BE of fold 46 is attached to portion 40 such that bottom edge BE funnels golf ball 48 (and other golf balls not shown) to a central location 50. A simple way to

15          accomplish the funneling is to attach bottom edge BE to portion 40 such that bottom edge BE angles down from frame 12 to central location 50. Instead of a fold in portion 40, fold 46 could be a separate piece of enclosure material attached to portion 40. Further, while shown attached to frame 12, fold 46 could be attached to enclosure 36 along sides 32 and 34. Attaching fold 46 to

20          sides 32 and 34 would provide the advantage of funneling golf balls that struck sides 32 and 34.

            Finally, shown in phantom, either or both sides 32 and 34 could have side folds 66. Side folds 66 would be similar to fold 46 and will not be further explained herein.

25           While the golf balls could easily be retrieved from central location 50, a bucket 52 or bag could be attached to central location 50 as well. Bucket 52 can be metal, mesh netting, canvass, or the like. Bucket 52, as shown in FIG. 4, could have a carrying handle 54 and a holder 56. Holder 56 would have a top edge 58. Top edge 58 would have a zipper 60 that could couple with a

30          corresponding zipper 62 at central location 50, such that bucket 52 could be releasably attached to central location 50. Zippers 60 and 62 could be

replaced with ties, elastic cord, or strips of hook and loop material similar to VELCRO®.

Finally, cage 10 could be provided with an artificial floor 64. Artificial floor 64 could be made out of a nylon material similar to enclosure 5 36 or other materials as a matter of design choice.

Referring now to FIG. 5, another embodiment of the present invention is shown. In particular, FIG. 5 shows a perspective view of a golf cage 500. Golf cage 500 is similar to golf cage 10, and those similar portions will not be re-described herein. However, for completeness, golf cage 500 may comprise 10 a frame 12 having crossed arcuate poles 14 and 16 defining an area A. Horizontal poles H (not labeled in FIG. 5 may be used). Frame 12 defined front side 28, backside 30, left side 32, and right side 34. Enclosure 36 encloses backside 30, left side 32, and right side 34 leaving an opening O in front side 28.

15 Instead of a fold 46 in a portion 40 of backside 30, a base net 100 is arranged over floor, which may be artificial floor 64. Base net 100 extends substantially over the floor and is coupled to frame 12 such that base net 100 forms a conical shape. The conical shape funnels golf balls (not shown) to a central location 102. A conventional coupling device 104, such as a tie, a 20 bungee cord, strips of hook and loop material, zippers, snaps, or the like couple base net 100. Coupling device 104 is shown substantially about each corner 106, 108, 110, and 112. Base net 100 could be coupled to enclosure 36 as well using a conventional stitch or weld 114. Optionally, base net 100 has seams 116 to assist in forming base net 100 into a conical shape. Anchor 118 25 may anchored central location 102 to the floor. Base net 100 also may be coupled so base net is coupled higher at corners 108 and 110, and lower at corners 106 and 112. This angles base net 100 towards the front of cage 500 making it easier to reach central location 102.

To prevent miss hits from rolling under base net 100, a blocking net 30 120 may be connected across the base of front side 28.

Central location 102 would be a sufficient collection point for golf balls; however, a hole 122 may be placed at central location 120. Similar to

age 10, hole 122 may be connected to a collection device. Alternatively, a tube 124 may extend from hole 122 to a corresponding hole 126 in blocking net 120. Thus, golf balls would drop into base net 100 and be funneled to central location 102. At central location 102, the golf balls would drop into  
5 hole 122 and travel along tube 124 and out hole 126 in blocking net 120. A collection device may be connected to hole 126 to assist in collection or the golf balls may be allowed to gather at such a location.

While the invention has been particularly shown and described with reference to an embodiment thereof, it will be understood by those skilled in  
10 the art that various other changes in the form and details may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.